APPENDICES

SECTION 6. VISUAL QUALITY AND SCENIC CHARACTER

6.A Project Setting

6.A.1 Summary Description of Regional Setting

There are two general types of land use in the Northeast Reliability Interconnect (NRI) project region. The first 7.5± miles of the proposed NRI right-of-way (ROW), which starts at the Orrington Substation and ends in the vicinity of the Route 9 crossing of the ROW in Eddington, consists primarily of wooded or cleared undeveloped land with rural residential development clustered around road crossings. The remaining 76.7± miles of the project, beginning after the Route 9 crossing and continuing to the St. Croix River, consists of large tracts of unpopulated private woodlands and commercial forest. The primary industry and source of income throughout the entire region is forestry products and pulp and paper production. The region is characterized by rolling topography, extensive woodlands, with numerous wetlands and waterbodies.

Although the majority of the ownership in the working forests of Hancock and Washington Counties is private, these lands are generally open to the public for traditional recreational uses, for example: hunting, fishing canoeing/kayaking, camping, etc. Visual impacts have been considered and evaluated from the perspective of these public users as well as the people who work in the woods. The scenic inventory has concentrated on the views from the major roads, trails, high points of land, rivers, and lakes. Efforts were made to identify these key viewpoints and minimize visual impact to the scenic resources along the route. In many cases the environmental benefits of co-locating the pipeline and road become a trade-off with the lower visual quality associated with the openness of the Stud Mill Road corridor.

6.B Discussion of Siting Considerations in Relation to Regionally Sensitive Visual Areas

In conjunction with a diverse group of governmental and private agencies, organizations and other interested stakeholders, Bangor Hydro-Electric Company (BHE) completed an extensive process of evaluating five potential alternative routes for the proposed NRI ROW. For a variety of reasons, including minimizing potential visual impacts, the proposed route was chosen because it follows existing utility corridors and roads to the maximum extent practicable. As a result, approximately 84 percent of the route is adjacent to existing electric transmission lines and/or the Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline, LLC (Maritimes) natural gas pipeline ROW. Approximately 70 percent of the proposed ROW follows both the Maritimes pipeline and the Stud Mill Road, an extensively-used haul road through interior Hancock and Washington Counties. The remaining 16 percent of the route is located outside of existing corridors primarily to avoid visual impacts to the Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, the Maine Youth Fish & Game Association Clubhouse at Pickerel Pond, and residents and potential development at the Breyer Heights Subdivision in Milford.

6.C Assessment of Potential Visual Impacts

BHE has located the NRI in a manner to minimize potential adverse visual impacts. For example, during the prior permitting effort, participants in the public hearings made clear that the visual impact of a new line that was off-set from existing corridors was greater than if the line were co-located with Stud Mill Road and the Maritimes gas pipeline. As a result, BHE has co-located the line with Stud Mill Road and the Maritimes gas pipeline through the downeast region, where visual impacts were of particular concern to recreational users of that area. The NRI is also co-located with the existing Maine Electric Power Company (MEPCO) line for approximately 12 miles, thereby minimizing the adverse visual impacts that might otherwise be associated with a new line through that area. BHE has also selected a structure type designed to minimize potential adverse impacts. As discussed in Section 1, BHE selected the wooden H-frame because it minimizes environmental and visual impacts and generally blends in with the rural landscape better than the more industrial structures such as a guyed delta or self-supporting

steel lattice structures. Finally, BHE has strategically located the poles and adjusted the alignment to minimize visual impacts at visually sensitive river crossings such as the Machias and Narraguagus river crossings.

BHE has also completed a comprehensive visual impact assessment of the proposed transmission line and Orrington Substation modifications in accordance with Chapter 315 of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations (06-096 CMR Chapter 315). The BHE NRI Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) contains detailed descriptions of the areas surrounding the Orrington Substation and the proposed ROW and an analysis of the visual impact of the project on scenic resources as defined by Chapter 315. Representative photographs showing the existing view from representative viewpoints and computer simulations of the constructed project on those views are included. The VIA is provided in Appendix 6-1. Based on the conclusions of the visual impact assessment, there will be no unreasonable adverse impact to existing scenic or aesthetic uses from the construction and operation of the NRI project.

APPENDIX 6-1

BANGOR HYDRO-ELECTRIC NRI VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT